



Testimony in support of HB 5262 AN ACT CONCERNING
WORKERS' COMPENSATION COVERAGE FOR CURRENT AND
FORMER UNIFORMED MEMBERS OF PAID OR VOLUNTEER
FIRE DEPARTMENTS

Dear Senator Gomes, Representative Tercyak and Esteemed Members of the Committee on Labor and Public Employees. My name is Louis Burch and I am hear today representing the Coalition for a Safe and Healthy Connecticut. The Coalition is a large, diverse advocacy group of over 50 member organizations and hundreds of concerned citizens, united in our concern about the growing body of evidence linking exposure to toxic chemicals in consumer products with the rise in serious disease. We work to raise awareness on the health impacts associated with exposure and to pass more health protective policies.

The Coalition strongly supports HB 5262 to expand workers' compensation coverage to firefighters. There is a growing body of evidence that links exposure to toxic chemical flame retardants with the rise in incidence of many serious cancers in firefighters. Since the 1970's chemical flame retardants have been added to many products found in our workplaces and homes. Unfortunately, recent research shows that the presence of these chemicals provide no significant fire safety benefit and are highly toxic. When products containing these chemicals ignite, the smoke and soot are more toxic than that of a regular fire. Protective equipment used by firefighters does not fully protect them from exposure to these chemicals.

A National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) study of cancer incidence among 30,000 career firefighters found higher rates of several types of cancer including mesothelioma, esophageal cancer, mouth and pharyngeal cancer and cancers of the kidney, breast, intestine, stomach and lung.¹

The University of Cincinnati did a meta-analysis of 32 peer reviewed published studies which included data of more than 100,000 firefighters. The study found that firefighters had a higher incidence of 4 types of cancer:

- 53% more likely to develop of multiple myeloma,
- 51% more likely to develop non-hodgkins lymphoma
- 28% more likely to develop prostate cancer.²

A study involving 16, 422 male firefighters in 5 Nordic countries found increased cancer rates for skin melanoma (62%), multiple myeloma (69%), lung cancer (90%), testicular cancer (51%) and two and half times the risk of prostate cancer and mesothelioma.³

The International Association of firefighters found 56% of all career firefighter line of duty deaths in 2013 were from job-related cancers---not due to actually fighting a fire.⁴

First responders are among the bravest and most vulnerable of our public servants, and are susceptible to both immediate and long term health and safety impacts in the course of their daily work routine. Recognizing the increasing toxicity of home environments and the higher prevalence of certain cancers and other health problems among firefighters and first responders, the CSHC strongly supports efforts to extend workers compensation benefits to these selfless individuals to cover the cost of

treatment for illnesses related to the daily occupational hazards they are faced with. **CSHC strongly supports HB 5262 and urges you to pass this important legislation as soon as possible**

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1. Daniels R, Kubale T, Yiin J, Dahm, M, et al. Mortality and cancer incidence in a pooled cohort of US firefighters from San Francisco, Chicago and Philadelphia (1950-2009). *Occup Environ Med* 2014;71:388-397.
 2. LeMasters G, Genaidy A, Succop P, Deddens P, et al. Cancer risk among firefighters: a review and meta-analysis of 32 studies. *Journal of occupational and environmental medicine / American College of Occupational and Environmental Medicine* 2006;48(11):1189-1202.
 3. Pukkala E, Martinsen JI, Weiderpass E, Kjaerheim K et al. Cancer incidence among firefighters: 45 years of follow-up in five Nordic countries. *Occup Environ Med.* 2014;71(6):398-404.
 4. International Association of FireFighters.